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NEWS RELEASE

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Colorado NRCS Approves Approximately $540,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants for Fiscal Year 2008

Lakewood, CO -- The Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has recently announced approximately $540,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to fund 12 projects throughout the state in fiscal year 2008 to develop technologies that will help farmers conserve and sustain natural resources on their operations.

"Conservation Innovation Grants will be funded to develop and refine cutting-edge conservation technologies and approaches to natural resource management and conservation, which will ultimately result in helping producers maintain viable agricultural operations that benefit the environment," said Tim Carney, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Lakewood, CO.

The 12 approved projects address traditional natural resource issues concerning agriculture such as water quantity, water quality improvement, livestock nutrient management, grazing lands and forest health, and soil resource management. The projects also address emerging natural resource issues including agricultural air emissions, energy conservation, and market-based approaches to conservation.

A short narrative on each approved project is as follows:

Biodiesel for the Local Farmer Pilot Project
Submitted by: Costilla County Economics Development Council Inc.
The bio-fuels and the by-product of feed meal will be used by the producers to produce bio-fuels using three different oilseed crops in an underserved area where this is new to the area. The economics will be evaluated for the producers in this low income area.

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Reclaiming Formally Irrigated Sandhill Cropland
Submitted by: Yuma County Conservation District
The Yuma County Conservation District will be trying to reclaim formerly sandy irrigated cropland. The croplands had been in corn production but, due to lack of irrigation water, the producers are trying to convert the lands back to native grasslands and are targeting forage species that will benefit the greater prairie chickens and other wildlife.

Grazing Land and Forest Health and Wildlife Habitat
Submitted by: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
This project's goal is to demonstrate using fire as a tool to manage grazing and forestlands. In accomplishing this, a local fire cooperative, which will consist of landowners, organizations, state, federal, and private partners, will be created. This trained group will take the lead for all prescribed burns.

No-Till Sunflowers for Oilseed Production
Submitted by: Dove Creek Conservation District
The Dove Creek Conservation District's goal is to transfer the "No-Till Technology" into an area that has used moldboard since the 1940s and has not budged from this operation, even by increasing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program cost docket. Will provide a larger incentive to demonstrate the practice and promote the production of oilseed crops for biodiesel.

Seed Production of Native Plants Beneficial to Sage Grouse
Submitted by: Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center
This project will identify plants and collect seed for sage grouse habitat. Due to the decline of Greater Sage Grouse populations, it has been identified that the habitat needs to be improved and more available seed sources. The Plant Material Center will improve the adaptation of these species and make seed available.

Stimulating Riparian Conservation through Demonstration and Assessment of Biological Tamarisk Control
Submitted by: Painted Sky RC&D
This project will set up four demonstration sites using biological control on tamarisk without mechanical control. The project will involve monitoring the progress of beetle and re-vegetation sites and will include training in the data collection. Data will be evaluated by Dr. Dan Bean, Insectary Manager, followed with an interim report.

The Republican River Basin Pathway Project
Submitted by: Yuma Conservation District
This project will help disseminate the data information gathered in a previous CIG. Data was gathered in the economics in converting from high water usage crops to low water crops to be used for biodiesel and meal products.

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Colorado Farm Energy Audit Data Collector Training Program
Submitted by: EnSave Inc.
This project plans to create an energy audit data collection training program. The goal is to establish a training and certification plan for data collectors who will perform and train producers in the data collection methodology. This will help analyze farm energy.

Online Irrigation Conservation Market and Farm Management Tool
Submitted by: Central Colorado Water Conservancy District
This project plans to create an online Irrigation Conservation Market to help producers plan their water needs and market their surplus water for other producers to be able to buy for their irrigation needs. It will also be able to telemetry control the irrigation wells for better irrigation water management.

Farm Scale Animal Feed and Biodiesel Demonstration Project
Submitted by: Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development
This project plans to establish a small-scale biodiesel and meal production facility in rural Eastern Colorado. Due to limited irrigation water, the area needs to find crops and opportunities to increase and maintain revenues. Although the concept is not new, the area's needs and ideas are new to this area.

Small Scale Wind Opportunities Demonstration Project
Submitted by: Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development
This project will promote the use and viability of Small Wind Power Plants in the Northeast Prowers Conservation District. Although not a new technology, its acceptance as an alternative power source is not widely accepted. Project will include workshops, micro-siting, and analysis of producer sites.

Conversion of Potato Waste to Value -Added Products and Energy in the San Luis Valley
Submitted by: San Luis Valley Resource Conservation and Development
The goal of this project is to improve water and energy conservation. It will convert 5.8 miles of lateral ditches to pipeline, and will control and monitor flows through the new pipeline exclusively with solar-powered equipment. All gates and turn outs will be fully automated using the radio telemetry, which will be solar powered. It is the first in the Western Slope of Colorado.

As part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service administers CIG, which provides competitive grants to state and local governments, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to promote the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

Additional information about CIG, including summaries of approved projects, is available at http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG/cig.htm.